

isles

Healthy environments.
Thriving communities.

2024

Annual Report



isles

Founded in 1981, Isles is a nonprofit organization rooted in Trenton with statewide reach that provides a wide range of interconnected and evolving services with a single aim: to create the environment necessary for people and communities to grow and thrive. That means healthy homes; safe and flourishing neighborhoods; green spaces; nutritious food; education and job training; convenient transportation; and financial security. By developing innovative and lasting solutions that address gaps created by an inequitable system, and sharing what we learn, Isles is challenging and changing the system itself.

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WHAT'S NEW IN 2024!

Workforce Development Department

At Isles, we believe that meaningful employment is a cornerstone of individual and community well-being. For years, we've worked to help residents build the skills, confidence, and financial stability they need to thrive in today's evolving job market. Now, we're proud to formalize and expand this work through our Workforce Development Department. Through our Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) and Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET), Isles has already helped hundreds prepare for in-demand careers, improve their financial health, and take critical steps toward self-sufficiency.

By officially establishing the Workforce Development Department, we are building on years of proven success, refining what works, and preparing to serve even more individuals in meaningful ways. Our comprehensive approach combines industry-recognized certification training in fields such as clean energy, construction, and building maintenance with employment coaching, financial capability workshops, and integrated services. This is only possible with the support of our partners, funders, and community. Together, we are creating real opportunities for people to thrive—not just in the job market, but in life.



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Over 250 families growing fruits and vegetables at Isles community gardens. Donating over 500 pounds of produce to food banks and community members from our gardens. 40,000 GOTrenton! rides connecting Trenton residents to jobs, grocery stores, and medical appointments. 3,705 high school students receiving “safe passage” to and from school each day, avoiding violence. Another 22, previously disconnected students, graduating high school and heading to jobs, technical schools, or other education. 200 more “healthy homes” being assessed for lead paint and other hazards.

These are just some of the data points you can read about in this year’s Annual Report. There’s even more data to dive into as you read on.

But the data only tells part of the story of Isles’ work. It’s the people and community behind the numbers that convey the depth of our impact. Miss Genevieve, for example, learned that the sweet taste of lead paint chips could entice her grandchildren, convincing her to make her home lead-safe. There is Gloria, who having lost her mother as an infant, saw her high school experience derail when her grandfather died during her senior year. Isles helped her regain her focus and finish her degree. And you’ll also read about John, who struggled with heavy debts until our Financial Opportunity Center team guided him to financial stability and a recovery plan.

The data and the stories paint the picture of Isles’ impact in the community. We’re able to deliver these results because our approach is unique. We focus on a wide range of interconnected and evolving services that combine to create an environment where people can grow and thrive. By developing innovative and lasting solutions that address gaps created by an inequitable system, and sharing what we learn, Isles challenges and even changes the system itself.

That leads to new approaches. Like last year’s novel and award-winning new service – GOTrenton! – the all-electric vehicle micro-transit system that provides a new way for transporting residents around the City with limited mass transit services. Those 40,000 riders got connected to needed services, to jobs, and to the doctor because we thought “outside the box” and developed a new way to get people around.

Now we’re working to bring similar systems to other small-sized cities around New Jersey.

Our approach only works because friends like you provide the support we need to develop and pilot these new concepts. As you read through these pages, please remember it’s your help that makes this work possible.

Thanks for continuing to stand with us.

In Community,



Sean Jackson, CEO



Urban Agriculture

Isles currently supports dozens of community and school gardens throughout Trenton. In 2024, we:

- Held open garden hours every Wednesday and various special events at our Tucker St. location and Roberto Clemente children's garden from April through October, including the Garden Social, Incubator Garden Workshops in the spring, and the School Garden Tour
- Donated a half of a ton of fresh produce to emergency food suppliers and community members
- Held monthly cooking workshops and Dinner & a Movie series with Chef Pearl featuring produce from Tucker Street and local farms
- Distributed approximately 10,000 vegetable seedlings to school and community gardens.
- Supported Capital City Farm with hundreds of hours of service
- Trained 12 new gardeners and held workshops in gardening, composting, foraging, garden construction, minor landscaping, farm-to-table cooking, and food preservation
- Sponsored two staff members to attend the annual Black Farmers & Urban Gardeners Conference in Houston, TX
- Partnered with Tito's Handmade Vodka for a cleanup initiative at Chestnut Garden
- Provided three Isles staff members and three AmeriCorps members to volunteer at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Flower Show



A child checks on a planting at the Tucker Street garden.

Tito's Handmade Vodka volunteers and Isles staff gather at Chestnut Avenue Garden after a day of transformative work. Over 30 volunteers helped revitalize Trenton's largest community garden, installing new gravel pathways, constructing raised beds for senior gardeners, and preparing for a new storage shed as part of Tito's \$11,000 Block to Block Program donation.



Community Corps

Trenton Community Corps has been a part of the AmeriCorps program and provides training and employment in climate resilience and green infrastructure careers. Projects include tree planting, watershed improvements, education in sustainability and sustainable practices, food system resilience, and urban reforestation. The Corps empowers people to build successful futures and communities by improving the local environment; developing skills to ensure future success; growing pride in Trenton's assets; and exposing them to career paths for their futures.

Key Achievements:

- Along with tree planting, watered over 250 trees to keep them alive during multiple droughts
- Hosted a variety of preschool and after school groups for tours and environmental activities
- Partnered with a Youth Inclusion Initiative DEP group over the summer to create a rain garden behind the Isles Tucker Street office
- Planted over 100 trees throughout Trenton, supporting urban greening and sustainability efforts
- Installed 8 hand-painted garbage cans to Downtown businesses and partners
- Contributed over 12,000 hours of service
- 6 members, 24 alumni



Isles Community Corps and community volunteers plant trees in Cadwalader Park.

"Meeting and engaging with community members that also have the same ideals or goals and a passion for trying to improve our community and our ecosystem — that's the most meaningful part of this work for me."

— Jordan Vazquez,
Trenton Community Corps member

Jordan Vazquez and Momo Sonii carefully tend to bean plants in the hoop house at the Tucker Street garden. Through hands-on agricultural training, Corps members gain valuable skills while helping to provide fresh produce to Trenton residents.



Lead Hazard Control, Energy Efficiency, and Healthy Homes

Isles provides home health assessments and retrofits to low-income homes to improve energy efficiency, remove lead-based paint hazards and improve indoor health and safety.

In 2024, Isles:

- Provided 200 in-person and virtual Healthy Home Assessments
- Completed 60 lead hazard control (abatement and remediation) projects
- Weatherized or provided heating system repairs or replacement to more than 40 homes which affected more than 120 low-income residents
- Attended 23 community outreach events reaching hundreds of Trenton community members



**Miss Genevieve Grant's Story:
A Home Transformed with Care**

Miss Genevieve Grant first connected with Isles through Elena, a member of our First-Time Homebuyers program. She was living in a home on Miller Street when a lead assessment revealed the presence of lead paint. Concerned for the safety of her grandchildren, who often visited, she was determined to create a healthier environment. During her journey with Isles, she learned something that deeply surprised her—lead has a sweet taste. It was a revelation that underscored the hidden dangers lurking in her home, especially for her curious grandchildren.

What stood out most to Miss Genevieve was the unwavering support and kindness of the Isles team. She felt truly cared for, knowing that there were no strings attached—just a genuine commitment to making her home safer. Isles provided her with a brand-new door, sealed gaps around her windows and baseboards, and ensured that her home was properly weatherized.

The transformation was immediate. She described her home as warmer, brighter, and more beautiful than ever, inspiring her to decorate and take even more pride in her space.

When asked what she would say to other families facing similar concerns, her message was clear: “Definitely contact Isles. Go get it done.” For her, the biggest takeaway was not just the physical improvements, but the kindness and dedication of the people who made it happen.

Miss Genevieve's story is a testament to the power of a safe and healthy home—and to the difference that compassion and commitment can make in a community.



Isles Youth Institute (IYI)

Isles Youth Institute (IYI) offers alternative education options for disengaged students seeking their high school equivalency diploma, vocational skills training, and life skills training. Isles has developed an effective peer-based approach for students ages 16 to 24, who have struggled in conventional school settings and/or have had encounters with the justice system. All IYI students learn basic construction skills and apply these skills to rehabilitate at least one abandoned home in Trenton each year.

During the 2024 academic year, IYI achieved significant milestones:

- 22 IYI students participated in graduation, earning their high school diplomas
- 9 students earned Pre-Apprentice Construction Training (PACT) certificates
- 2 students earned Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) certificates
- 28 youth participated in meaningful community service projects
- 18 students earned CPR/First Aid Certification
- 15 Students received OSHA Certification
- 42 students, community members and alumni participated in various internal and external job training internship opportunities
- 36 students participated in the Leadership Academy: weekly training sessions and workshops on key leadership skills, field trips to local businesses and city leaders
- 28 youth were placed in paid internships, trade school, or college



From Struggle to Success: Gloria's Story

At 24, Gloria Carter's journey to IYI began with early tragedy — losing her mother at age two and her grandfather during her senior year, forcing her to choose between education and survival. Years of instability followed until she found herself at Isles in 2023.

"Traditional school was everything to me actually, it was like an escape," Carter recalls. "But life had different plans."

After completing the program's "mental toughness" orientation, Carter earned her high school diploma in just one month with high scores. IYI then offered her a paid internship in community engagement, which evolved into a full-time position.

Today, Carter helps others access the same resources that transformed her life. "I'm living proof," she says. "I actually went and got my diploma because I had this resource."

"I think the best thing that IYI has ever shown me was that when you have it in you, all you have to take is the initiative to show up."



Financial Opportunity Center (FOC)

The Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) thrives as a holistic financial wellness hub, helping residents build economic stability through integrated services. In partnership with the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), our center combines financial education, employment services, and benefits access.

In 2024, Isles administered the NJ Department of Labor's Lifelong Learning Accounts program, helping 67 unemployed and underemployed residents access funding for career-advancing certifications in truck driving, home inspection, and medical billing and coding.

Our comprehensive approach includes:

- Financial Coaching: Guidance on budgeting, credit improvement, debt reduction, and savings
- Employment Coaching: Job training enrollment, employment search support, resume development, and interview preparation
- Income Support Assistance: Connecting clients to benefits and affordable housing programs
- Homeownership Counseling: Preparing first-time homebuyers and helping homeowners avoid foreclosure

In 2024, the Financial Opportunity Center achieved impressive results:

- 220 customers received housing or foreclosure counseling
- 186 people participated in financial coaching services
- 146 customers benefited from employment coaching
- 38 customers accessed public benefits, including affordable housing programs

Success Story: From Debt to Financial Freedom

John, a Princeton University employee, was drowning in credit card debt. With help from his Isles FOC coach, he learned effective budgeting and enrolled in a debt management program that lowered his interest rates.

The results have been life changing. John is now on track to eliminate his \$60,000 debt in just 4½ years—compared to over 20 years without Isles' intervention.



First-Time Homebuyers' Workshop attendees proudly display their earned certificates.



Success Story: Darrel's Journey to Truck Driving

Before coming to Isles, Darrel was stuck "going from warehouse job to warehouse job" in search of better opportunities but finding only unsteady, low-paying work.

Darrel's path to a better future began when community connections led him to Isles' Financial Opportunity Center where he met with an employment coach.

When Darrel expressed interest in earning his Commercial Driver's License, his coach informed him about the Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLA) program (now Fund My Future), being administered by the FOC. The program provided over \$5,000 to cover Darrel's CDL training at a local driving school in Trenton.

Within a few months of enrolling, Darrel earned his driving certificate and license. He recently accepted a full time position with a national trucking company making long-haul journeys. With his new credential in hand, Darrel's future is bright!

Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET)

Isles' Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET) is a green collar job training facility, targeting careers in energy efficiency and environmental health. CEET is a Building Performance Institute (BPI) certified testing center, an EPA lead Renovation, Repair and Painting provider and credentials lead abatement workers through a State of New Jersey Department of Health approved training.

In 2024, CEET

- Provided the Healthy Homes for Community Health Workers course to 130 participants
- Provided Lead-Safe Renovation, Repair, and Paint training and certification for 231 workers
- Provided Lead Worker/Lead Supervision trainings for 29 lead workers
- Offered "The Eight Keys to a Healthy Home" three times to reach a total of 33 community members
- Provided Building Analyst-Technician training course to 29 workers
- Provided Job Readiness Skills training to 56 unemployed individuals

Stephon McCall (left) proudly displays his Welding Training Program certificate with CEET Training Manager Andre Thomas (right) at Isles. This training experience was part of his journey to build valuable skills and work habits that contributed to his success in the construction field.

Building Skills, Building Futures: Stephon's Journey

Stephon McCall, a returning citizen, began his path at CEET by attending job readiness training workshops before earning his EPA Lead Renovator Certification. His dedication caught the attention of Brian Miller, owner of Inner City Construction, who hired Stephon through CEET's Green Job Employer Council.

"I am so thankful to Isles for inviting me to the Soft Skills class," Stephon shares. "The class opened my eyes to a lot of things in terms of what I can do to be the best version of myself on the job and beyond. My patience and consistency led me to Inner City; I knew right away that it was where I was supposed to be."

Brian Miller values Stephon's contributions: "Stephon is reliable and he takes initiative on the job. He didn't have a lot of construction experience, but he made up for it with his willingness to learn and he's a quick learner."

Andre Thomas, CEET Training Manager, adds: "I immediately saw his focus in the soft skills classes. He was a great example and inspiration, and would still come to the classes to share his experience and how he was applying the soft skills to the job."

Stephon plans to attend solar panel installer training at Isles in 2025, continuing to build his skills and his future.



GOtrenton! Electric Vehicle Ride Share Service



GOtrenton! provides EV rideshare and van services to the public — improving mobility for low-income residents in Trenton and increasing access to jobs, healthcare, services, shopping, and recreation. To maintain as much access as possible, GOtrenton! continues to provide on-demand transportation to Trenton residents fare-free.

Isles has partnered with Circuit, which operates similar programs in other cities, to provide vehicles, manage daily operations, and hire and train local residents as drivers. With this service, we seize an opportunity to promote economic revitalization, job creation and transportation equity, while addressing air quality issues caused by internal combustion vehicles.

In 2024, GOtrenton! demonstrated remarkable growth and impact:

- Over 28,650 total rides completed
- Nearly 40,000 total passengers served
- Supported over 2,000 unique users monthly
- Ridership grew steadily throughout the year, with the highest usage numbers recorded in the later months of 2024

The program has proven essential to many residents, with the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, Trenton Transit Center, and Oakland Park Apartments being the most frequent pickup and drop-off locations. This pattern highlights GOtrenton!'s vital role in connecting residents to food resources, public transportation, and housing.



GOtrenton! is a safe and reliable, zero-emission, fare-free, door-to-door service available to all Trenton residents.

National Recognition for Innovation

In November 2024, GOTrenton! received two prestigious awards recognizing its groundbreaking approach to sustainable urban transportation. The program was honored with a national award from Plug In America at Automobility LA 2024, following in the footsteps of last year's recipient, Hertz Corporation. Additionally, GOTrenton! received the Clean Cities Coalition Community Engagement Award at the League of Municipalities conference in Atlantic City.

"Receiving the Plug In America national award is a profound recognition of our mission to transform urban transportation," said Sean Jackson, CEO of Isles. "This honor validates our vision of creating a sustainable, accessible mobility solution that not only moves people but moves our community forward."

As the first free, all-electric community rideshare program of its kind in the nation, GOTrenton! represents a dual-purpose solution addressing both transportation inequity and environmental sustainability. The program currently operates four smaller vehicles, two vans, and one ADA-approved van, with plans to double capacity in the near future.



Isles CEO Sean Jackson and Founder Marty Johnson at the Plug In America Drive Electric Awards ceremony to accept a national award for innovation.

Community Planning & Development

Isles partners with residents, civic organizations, and neighborhood associations to identify community needs and interests, and support the implementation of recommendations that emerge from planning processes. In addition, Isles leads city-wide research and planning initiatives related to blight reduction, creative placemaking, and food systems.

In 2024, this work included:

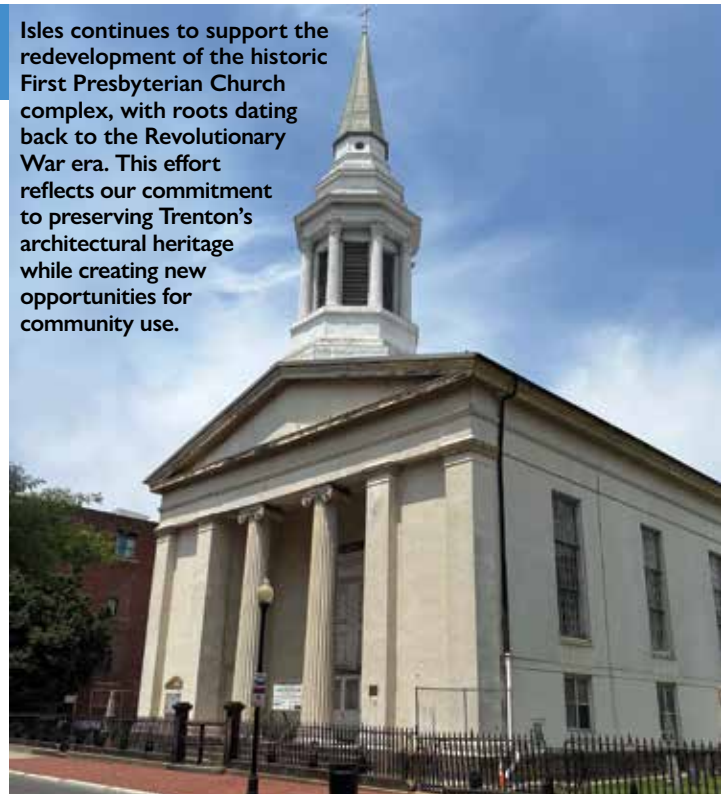
- Development of an open data repository known as Open Data Trenton to share data and documents on Trenton's vacant properties, crime, and other quality-of-life issues with the general public



Sunrise Luncheonette exemplifies Isles' commitment to long-term community investment in 2024. This downtown establishment continues to benefit from our multi-year support, which has included professional signage improvements, critical building repairs, and ongoing business mentorship.

Our sustained relationship with Sunrise represents the core of our Community Development approach: providing comprehensive, tailored support that enables local businesses to overcome challenges and build resilience. Through consistent engagement and targeted resources, we've helped transform not just a storefront, but strengthened a vital community gathering place that contributes to the economic fabric of our downtown area.

Isles continues to support the redevelopment of the historic First Presbyterian Church complex, with roots dating back to the Revolutionary War era. This effort reflects our commitment to preserving Trenton's architectural heritage while creating new opportunities for community use.



- Installed a series of porch lights for downtown residential properties to improve pedestrian-level lighting
- Supported repairs, repainting, and replacing historic windows to a mixed use property on South Warren Street
- Coordinated business mentorship support for 7 downtown businesses, in partnership with a local business development company. Services include business plan development, financial projections, budgeting, bookkeeping, marketing, ecommerce, loan assistance, and back office support

(Continued next page)

Community Planning & Development *(Continued)*

In 2024, we continued our work with the Trenton Downtown Association and the City of Trenton's Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) program to help support the health and vibrancy of downtown residential properties and small businesses and create a shared sense of place. This work allowed us to:

- Award over \$145,000 in small grants to 23 downtown businesses. These business grants supported interior/exterior repairs, equipment upgrades, merchandise display upgrades, and other improvements
- Provide 16 new signage improvements at downtown businesses
- Fund over 60 busking opportunities to support 13 local musicians and groups
- Coordinate pop-up market opportunities for 34 local entrepreneurs
- Facilitated the launch of two new downtown businesses through our incubator program, a direct outcome of the 2023 Business Plan Competition: Soap Stash (8 West Lafayette Street), a local cosmetics and soap company, and Life of Lucid (5 South Broad Street), a custom wig shop and salon
- Award over \$3,000 in business supplies and equipment to 15 pop-up businesses via the Entrepreneur Fund

T-Recs: Mobile Recreation

T-Recs, our mobile recreation unit housed in a converted bread truck, continues to bring joy and engagement to Trenton neighborhoods where recreational programming and open space may be limited. Since its launch in 2015, T-Recs has been activating underutilized public spaces throughout the city, providing supervised activities that foster positive social interactions and support the academic, social, physical, and emotional needs of Trenton's youth.

The colorful T-Recs truck arrives at community spaces and events loaded with a variety of interactive games, art supplies, and recreational equipment—from giant Connect 4 and cornhole to stilts and creative art projects. Each activity is supported by dedicated Isles staff who ensure safe, engaging experiences for children and adults alike.

In 2025, T-Recs will expand its offerings to include targeted STEM programming specifically designed for pre-K to 5th grade participants. This exciting development will provide hands-on, inquiry-based learning opportunities that introduce and reinforce foundational STEM concepts and skills. By sparking early curiosity in these topics, we hope to inspire Trenton's young people to explore potential future careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

T-Recs' presence at community gatherings doesn't just provide fun activities—it creates opportunities for community members to connect with each other and with Isles' broader services. Through recreation and play, T-Recs continues to be a vital part of our mission to build healthy, sustainable communities in Trenton.



Trenton Community Street Team

Trenton Community Street Team (TCST) is a community-based violence intervention and prevention initiative designed to eliminate the cycle of violence in Trenton by providing conflict mediation, victim advocacy and support, safe passage around schools, community safety walks, and public safety roundtables.

In 2024, TCST:

- Responded to 49 acts of violence in the community, providing resources that support healing and opportunity
- Served 298 participants through the Outreach Department, offering referrals and support services
- Dedicated 5,362 staff hours to Safe Passage across all high schools and Isles Youth Institute
- Hosted, supported, or sponsored 61 community events

Becoming the Change: Andre Eutsey



Andre Eutsey proudly wears his TCST uniform, embodying his journey from gang leader to community guardian. Through his work with Trenton Community Street Team, he now helps guide youth away from the path he once traveled.

Andre Eutsey's path with the Trenton Community Street Team represents the power of self-transformation. Once considered a gang leader, Eutsey now works as a "hybrid" team member, focusing on Safe Passage and community care initiatives.

"We post out there before the kids come out of school to make sure it's the flow of good traffic and nobody's bothering any children," Eutsey explains. "We see them into school and off from school safely."

His community care work connects residents with vital services, helping them secure identification documents, access job resources, and find housing assistance.

A pivotal moment came in 2022 when Eutsey's cousin was killed on Oakland Avenue. This tragedy prompted him to reevaluate his life's direction. While driving past 9th Grade Academy, he spotted a childhood friend wearing a Trenton Street Team vest. This encounter led to a meeting with director Perry Shaw and launched his journey with the team.

"The impact is very huge, especially with the youth—getting out there and catching people before they get to where I once was," Eutsey reflects.

"Our work allows us to build trust and guide youth toward positive paths," says Heather Johnson-Smith, TCST operations manager. "We're committed to breaking cycles of violence through compassion, empathy, and practical support."



Trenton Community Street Team Staff

Johnson Center for Learning & Impact

The Johnson Center is leveraging decades of Isles' expertise in community development and environmental work to affect systems change. The Johnson Center seeks to advance research and evaluation of existing public policies while also exploring projects that investigate new solutions to the long-standing structural issues that pose the greatest challenges to our ultimate goals of fostering self-reliant families and healthy, sustainable communities.

"Isles is not just an environmental organization — we are a community development organization. Our work in the clean energy space isn't just about environmental benefits. It's about making sure our communities are healthy and sustainable. This work is people-centered." — Amisha Mukhopadhyay, Clean Energy Coordinator

In 2024, the Johnson Center:

- Led a comprehensive clean energy initiative focused on three core goals: supporting clean energy legislation, maintaining a statewide coalition of partner organizations, and increasing public education on clean energy benefits, particularly for low and middle-income households
- Championed key legislative bills including Senate Bill 249 to establish a beneficial building electrification program, Senate Bill 237 requiring utility companies to deliver 100% clean energy by 2035, and Senate Bill 258 focused on grid modernization
- Spearheaded groundbreaking maternal health research revealing the connection between historical lead exposure and current maternal health crises, with a particular focus on addressing New Jersey's wide racial disparities in maternal and infant mortality
- Advanced a bill in the New Jersey Legislature requiring lead screening for pregnant women during both first and third trimesters, gaining support from various stakeholders including the Preeclampsia Foundation
- Expanded community education on lead exposure risks, particularly focusing on the previously overlooked threat to pregnant women and their unborn children through the remobilization of lead during pregnancy
- Continued to advocate for environmental justice, recognizing that low-income communities face disproportionate burdens from lead contamination and other environmental hazards while having less access to healthcare resources

"It's a big surprise, so you may not have any lead in your bloodstream until your last trimester, and you'll have no idea that's occurring. So if you were exposed to lead as a child, the lead locks in the bones where calcium was supposed to be. So even if you moved out of that environment long ago, when you are pregnant as an adult, you may very well remobilize lead locked in the bones when the body is trying to pull out calcium to nurture the fetus." — Elyse Pivnick, Senior Director for Environmental Health



Isles interns and Trenton Mayor's *Take It to the Streets* youth ambassadors enjoy a team-building activity designed to enhance social, emotional, and problem-solving skills as a team.

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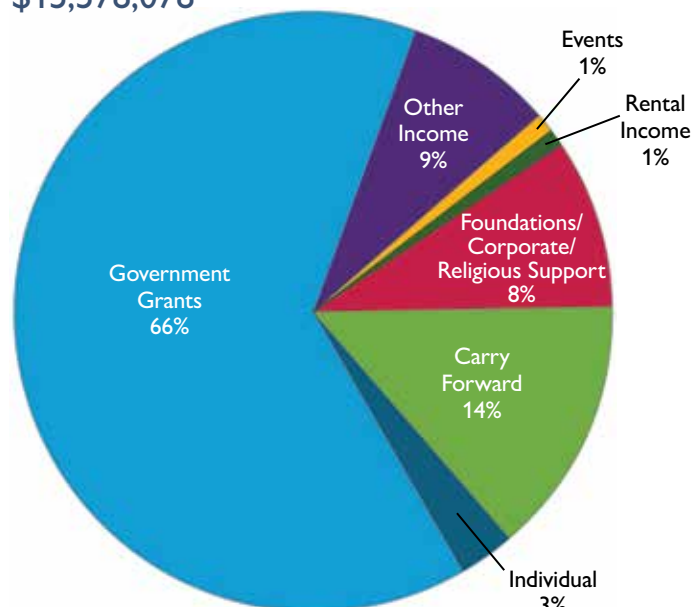
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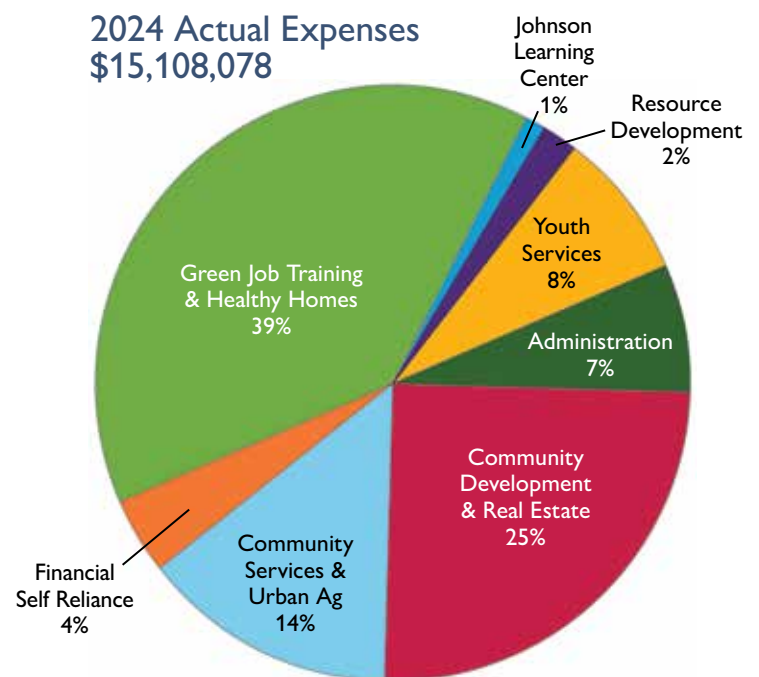


FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2024

2024 Actual Revenue
\$15,578,078



2024 Actual Expenses
\$15,108,078



A complete audited financial statement will be available at our office or at isles.org/financials.

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